

AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Malaria

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BY

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Malaria

A knowledge of the theory and source of disease, is not always a necessary qualification, to enable the practitioner of Medicine to arrest its ravages, A Theorist relying upon his theory as the ground, work of his success in practice, will often, find himself surrounded by difficulties from which his fine spun theories cannot give relief, and yet all practitioners of Medicine should by all available means, at their command, search out such truths, as are demonstrable, and which address themselves to the judgments, of

Shall by the summing up
of a few facts, and deductions
therefrom endeavor to give
a reason for the faith that
is in us;

Malaria, is the well known
parent of a common class
of diseases, known, to the
southern, and south-western
States of this Confederacy,
Teaming with their mighty
rivers, and boasting of their
mighty Rivers, and beautiful
Valleys, monumental oaks,
and majestic Tulips, Here
in the wide spread valley
of America's great River
the mighty Mississippi,
We annually see a class of

diseases which are a terror to mankind. Strange that it should be so, strange that this fair Eden of the world, should have lurking within its bosom, a source of disease, which is a terror to those who may wish to feast their eyes and risk their fortunes in a land seemingly so blessed, by Heaven, a land yielding annually a richer and more abundant harvest, than is gathered, in any other Clime. Let us now briefly notice a few facts having reference to the immediate valley of the Mississippi River;

It is known that this River annually overflows her banks, and that from fifty to sixty miles of bottom or low lands are submerged beneath, the sweeping flood. These low lands are interspersed, with innumerable Lakes, Ponds, and marshes while the soil is alluvial, containing a very considerable amount of sand. The overflows of this river come at irregular periods, sometimes by the last of February or the first of March and again as late as the last of April or the first of May, and going off by the last march or the first

of April and if late passing
off not till the last of
May or the first of June,
When there is an early
overflow, it is followed, by
very little malarial disease,
But if the overflow occurs
late in the spring, it will
be followed by a great excess
of malarial fevers,
Take for instance the year
1850, when the overflow came
late, and did not pass off
until the middle of June,
and we see that there was
more malarial disease in
the regions bordering on these
low lands, than was probably
ever known either before or

Since, Within fifteen days
after the overflow had passed
off whole communities
were prostrated with the various
forms of malarial fever
Take again the year 1854
when the overflow came early,
and passed off by the 10th of April,
and, we find this to have been
the most healthy year known
to the inhabitants of the great
valley. From these facts we make
the following deductions, we have
said that the overflow in 1850,
came late in the spring, and
that within fifteen days after
the overflow had passed off,
those persons living adjacent
to the overflowed lands were

Stricken down with malarial disease, The Lakes, Ponds, & marshes were left, full of the poison, while the soil was perfectly saturated; with the hot sun of June, operating upon the confined or stagnant water, and our opinion is that the water thus confined, and under the influence of a hot sun Malaria was the product of the contact, The malarial poison after being generated was taken up by the gentle winds, and was issued out, to do its works, We have said also, that in the year 1854, The overflow passed off early, and that this was a remarkably

healthy year, in the region
referred to, so much so that
Doctors lived hard & did nothing,
but shrink from the glorious
prospect of starvation which
lay before them, We account
for the healthfulness of this
year, thus the overflow had
passed off early, and the hot
sun of June, July & August
found no water in the Lakes
& Ponds and soil to manufa-
cture malaria from, another
notable fact in reference
to the year 1854, was, that
the month of March saw more
of the winds common to that
month, it was perfectly
calm, until about the last

day, when a brisk breeze
began to blow, & continued
throughout the month of
April, March, April and
May were cold and dry, with
scarcely any rain at all,
so that the water which had
been left in the Lakes,
Ponds and other low grounds
had disappeared, while
that in the soil had either
evaporated or had receded
so far into the earth, that
when the hot sun of summer
came, it shone upon empty
reservoirs, and a dry earth,
Now if the decomposition of
vegetable matter, is the
source of malaria why is it?

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That Bilious fever and chills
and fever prevail so fiercely
in the months of June,
July, & August while vegetation
is in its full vigor,
The process of decay in vegetation
commences in September as a
general rule, and it is an
undeniable fact that just about,
the time the putrefactive process
commences malarial diseases
begin to subside, If this be true,
(and we believe it cannot be suc-
cessfully contradicted) when in
connection with the facts previ-
ously stated, where we ask
are the facts and arguments
to come from, to revive the
old Theory? none can be

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found, worthy of a moments
consideration, men in their
advocacy of the old Theory
are conscientious, they have
heard all their lives that the
decay vegetable matter was the
source of malaria, it has become
with them a fixed opinion
which we denominate, an old
prejudice, The people generally
believe it, and the Doctors wishing
to dance to the music, cry out,
These diseases are all caused,
by the decay of vegetation.
What if Professor Wood
of Philadelphia does say
(on page 239) that all the varieties
of miasmatic fever occur
most frequently, and as original

affections, almost exclusively in the latter part of the summer, and in autumn, we of the south & west know, that such is not always the fact, on page 151. Prof Wood says among other things that the circumstances which appear to be essential to the production of miasmata are heat, moisture, and vegetable decomposition" he says further the peculiar morbid effects ascribed to this cause, and by which alone its existence can be recognised, seldom originate at a temperature under 60° F, even though vegetable decomposition may be going on, at 80° continues the Prof they are often very

prevalent and are generally checked by the occurrence of frost, a certain continuance of the heat is not less necessary than a certain degree of it,

Hence says he miasmatic diseases scarcely ever prevail beyond the 56th degree of latitude; because though many days in summer, may be very hot, the warm season is short. The nearer we approach to the equator, the more violent, as a general rule do they become, implying a greater intensity of the cause, within the latitudes where there is a regular change of the seasons, they do not commonly make their appearance

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until the middle and often not
till the close of summer. Here
we have the admission of
Prof Wood of the fact that
heat is the agent in the
production of Malaria, "The
nearer we approach to the equator
the more violent, as a general
rule do they (Malarial fevers) become,
implying a greater intensity of the
cause," And if the Prof had added
a greater amount of the element,
he would have come much
nearer, a just and rational con-
clusion, and when he admits
as he does that heat & moisture
are both necessary, It follows
as a matter of course, that the
greater the heat, and the more

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abundant the moisture the greater
the amount of malaria, produced,
and to prove that the Prof is
in error, we have only to point
to the fact, already mentioned,
that, we have more Remittent
and intermittent fevers in July
& August than any months
in the year, at the very time
that vegetation is in its most
flourishing condition, and that
when the decay of vegetable
matter does commence, at about
the same time precisely there
is a decrease in malarial diseases
and if this be true and it is
undeniably so, we claim it to be
a full and complete, answer to
all that the professor has said

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regarding vegetable decomposition, and its agency in the production of malaria, In 1848, the difficulties between the United States and Mexico, being amicably adjusted, the American Army took up the line of march for home. It will be remembered that in portions of Mexico, there is what is called the "Rainy Season," which occurs in June, in that portion of country through which the American Army had to pass on its way from the City of Mexico, to Vera-cruz, it was in the months of June and July that the American Army passed through this rainy district, and embarked

at Vera Cruz, Those who embarked
early in June, were not the
sufferers, But those who
embarked during the latter
part of June, and in July
were the sufferers, from
malarial fevers, Within
a few days after the rain
had ceased, Malarial disease
began to develop itself, and
well it might, for here
was both moisture and heat
in abundance, The earth
was perfectly saturated with
water, with the solar rays
of a hot summer sun,
beaming in its mighty
force upon the earth,
Did those rains cause

vegetation to decay, nay
verily, it received new life,
from the genial showers,
and was seen to thrive
and flourish, giving to the
Valley and the hill, side,
a rich green & flowery garb,
Who does not remember,
the time that a dam was
thrown across some neighbour-
ing stream, for the erection
of a mill, and that so soon,
as the piercing rays of a
summers sun were poured
out upon the stagnant
water, the people in the
vicinity of the dam were
frustrated with the various
forms of malarial fever,

not in the decline of
summer, or the beginning
of autumn, But in June,
July, and August, It
often happens that
the spring showers will
tear away these dams and
the gentle stream flows
on, The stagnant water
is all removed and the
region round about is
as free from disease
as the neighbouring
districts, The draining
of some highland
Baron^{cy} has been often
known, to relieve
a neighbourhood from
incesses of miasmatic

views, We trust that
the foregoing facts though
crudely thrown together,
when weighed in
Balance of argument
are sufficient, to establish,
the truth of what we
claim as being the only
rational Theory, in regard
to the source of Malaria.